

Board of Health Regulations for the Keeping of Hens

Definitions

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this section, shall have meanings ascribed to them in this section:

“Hen” shall mean a female chicken

“Henhouse” shall mean an enclosed structure for hens

“Pen” a pen shall mean the enclosed outdoor space for hens

1. No person shall keep hens on their premises without obtaining a permit from the Board of Health. Application fees are \$50 for the first year and \$25 for annual renewal with no modifications to the application or owner.
2. A maximum of six (6) hens may be kept on a lot. Roosters are not allowed to be kept in Somerville. An exemption will be made for existing henhouses at the time of the passage of this ordinance and shall be permitted to keep existing hens of more than six (6) hens until they expire. Renewal fees shall apply to existing henhouses.
3. The applicant shall notify abutters of the request to keep hens on applicant’s property.
4. An enclosed henhouse shall provide at least two (2) square feet per hen and an enclosed pen shall provide at least four (4) square feet of pervious surface per hen kept on the property.
5. Structures shall meet all build code requirements. Structures exceeding one hundred twenty (120) sq feet or ten (10) feet in height will require building permits and structures with electrical or plumbing shall require appropriate permits.
6. Henhouse structure will not interfere with any utility or other feature of the property that needs suitable access.
7. Henhouse structure will be located in a well-drained area that does not discharge on a public way or neighbor’s property.
8. All outdoor roaming areas for hens shall be sufficiently enclosed and screened from the street and neighboring properties.
9. Hens shall not be kept within the living area of the residential structure.
10. Massachusetts Department of Public Health Food Protection Program states that the sale of farm fresh eggs must be stored and maintained at 45°F (7.2°C).
11. Noise from hens at the property boundary must conform to the City’s Noise Ordinance.
12. Odors from hens, hen manure, or other hen-related substances shall not be perceptible at the property boundaries.
13. Waste shall either be composted with carbonaceous material such as hay, bedding, or leaves or stored in a sealed container until it is removed from the property.
14. Henhouses shall be cleaned at least on a weekly basis.

15. Hens shall be confined to the subject property and not allowed to wander onto other properties including City owned land.
16. Hen feed must be stored in a rodent-proof container inside the primary structure.
17. Henhouse and attached pen must be constructed securely so as to exclude predators and rodents.
18. The applicant must watch the Board of Health video regarding the keeping of hens in Somerville.
19. The Board of Health may suspend, revoke, or decline to renew a hen permit for cause after reasonable notice to the licensee of the ground for the proposed action.
20. If the Board of Health, or its agent, determines that the hen(s) causes disturbances on, or damage to neighboring property or public areas, the Board or its agent may require that the hens be removed, at owner's expense, immediately.